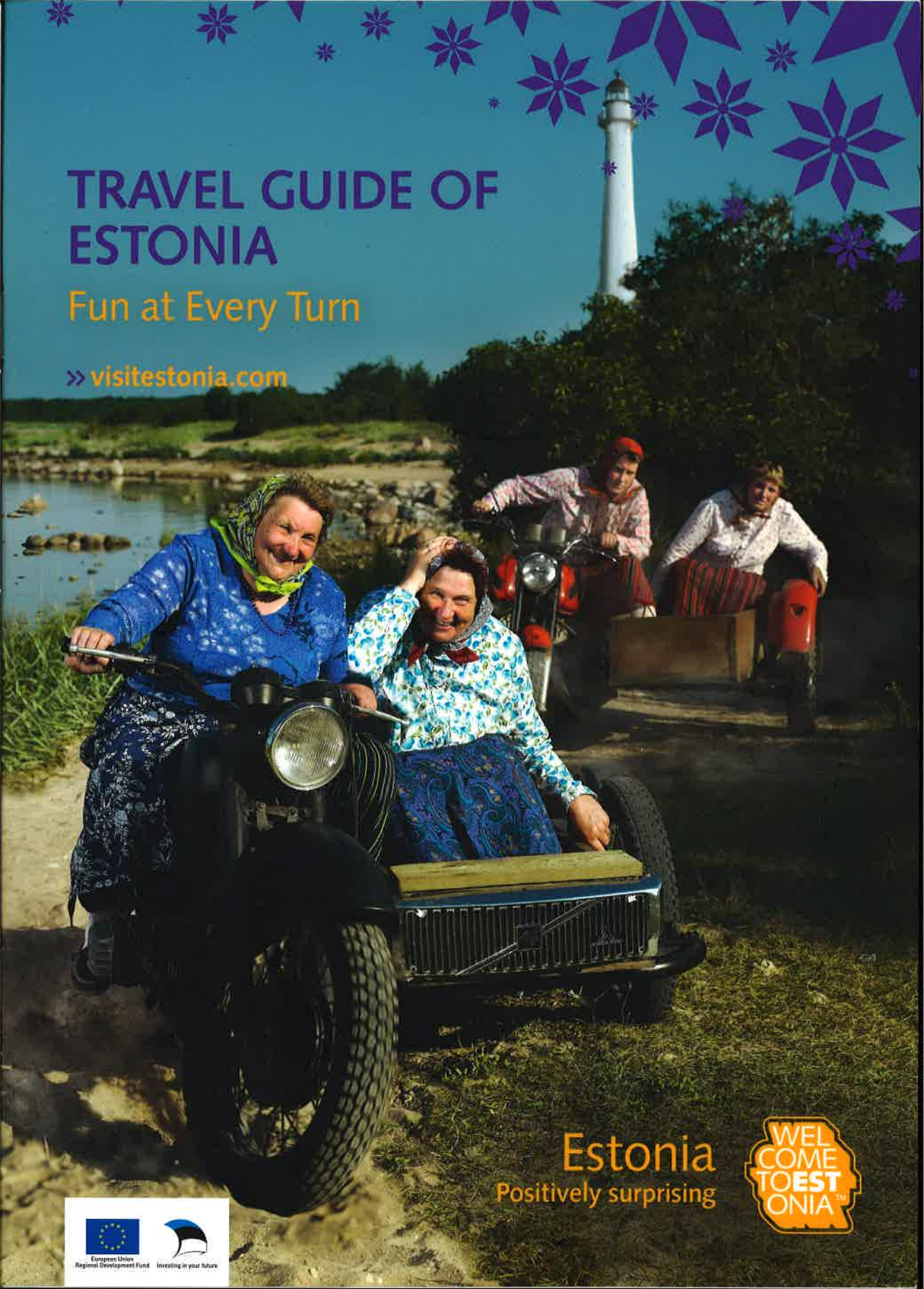
TRAVEL GUIDE OF ESTONIA

Fun at Every Turn

» visitestonia.com



Estonia
Positively surprising

WELCOME TO ESTONIA™

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10 REASONS TO VISIT ESTONIA

- Fresh air, unspoiled nature, wild forests, and a variety (more than 2000 km) of hiking trails.
- Short distances – no need to choose between city and nature when you can easily have both.
- Old Town Tallinn – a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Nearly 3800 km long coastline, beautiful sandy beaches, more than 1,500 islands, and a rich maritime culture.
- Rich culture: interactive museums, historical manors and fortresses, over 200 exciting festivals a year.
- Unique cultural 'islands': the Setos, whose special form of singing can be found on the UNESCO World Heritage list; the motorcycle-riding and sea-faring people of Kihnu island, whose culture is also on the UNESCO World Heritage list; and the Russian Old Believers.
- Curative mud baths and relaxing spas.
- A favourite stopover for migratory birds and a habitat for wild animals now rare in the rest of Europe.
- Pure and fresh organically grown and wild-sourced foods.
- An environment that inspires innovation: one of the first European countries where high-speed 4G mobile broadband covers nearly the entire territory, free Wi-Fi is a veritable human right, many convenient online public services.

Nature, beauty and history with a little twist.

ESTONIA – WHERE THE MODERN EMBRACES THE PRIMEVAL

"What is this country?" It's not just tourists who ask this question in wonderment, but Estonians themselves. Enchanting, alluring, modern, but traditional, conservative but warm – all these words can be used to describe not just Estonia as a country but also the people who live here. Estonia is small in area but big in climate, geography, traditions and culture, encompassing many contrasts.

In your hands is a travel guide about three journeys in northern, western and southern Estonia, which will hopefully help you find interesting places and activities. There are many different people and also many different travellers, and the selection below certainly does not attempt to be the ultimate truth: some want to drive faster, some want to learn more; some will find things that excite them somewhere near the things we recommended, etc. When you're planning your tip, you can find more information about the sites and routes on the website visitestonia.com and in tourist information centres all over Estonia. We hope that this travel guide is a source of inspiration that helps you find your own Estonia.
Welcome, and have a wonderful holiday!

The Town Hall Square is the heart of the Old Town in Tallinn.

NORTHERN ESTONIA

Days 1 and 2: Tallinn (≈ 40 km)

The capital **Tallinn** offers activities for every age and taste, regardless of the season. Summer visitors will delight in knowing that the city's indented, close to 50 km long coastline has many public beaches. And in every season, one of Europe's best preserved historical city centres is steeped in mediaeval-era charm. Life in **Old Town Tallinn** revolves around **Town Hall Square**, where the aroma of roasted sugared almonds – made according to a recipe from the Middle Ages – floats on the air. Six centuries old, **Town Hall** towers over the square, where many streets meet. Stand with your back to the Town Hall and another 600-year-old institution is visible: **the *Raeapteek*, one of the oldest apothecary shops in Europe**, where an herbal libation made on the premises recalls times long past.

The narrow, beautiful and mysterious cobblestone streets are waiting to be discovered.

The Old Town is bursting at its seams with culture and much of it can be discovered on visits to its many churches. **St. Olaf's Church**, located on the edge of the Old Town, has a steeple that was once 159 metres high, giving it a claim to being **the world highest building** from 1549–1625. In summer, visitors can ascend the 258 steps in the spiral suitcase to enjoy the great views from the top.

After touring the lower town, climb up to **Toompea hill**, the seat of government since time immemorial. Its buildings house many Estonian government institutions, including **Parliament**. As a symbol of the continuity of the country's sovereignty through various occupations, the blue black and white tricolour is raised every sunrise on ***Pikk Hermann*** (Tall Hermann) tower while the national anthem plays. The **Aleksander Nevsky Cathedral** directly opposite Parliament represents the classic Orthodox tradition with its onion-shaped domes.

4 The 13th century **Cathedral of St. Mary the Virgin**, also near Parliament, is the seat of the Lutheran Church and is of interest for its numerous heraldic coats of arms, grave plaques and chandeliers. The most imposing defensive tower in the Baltic Sea region, Kiek in de Kök is the entrance to the 5 underground **Bastion passageways**. Exciting tours take visitors on a trip from the distant past to the year 2219 A.D.

The observation platforms on Toompea hill yield the definitive view of Tallinn to add colour to memories and photo albums. The red roofs and narrow lanes of the old town, outer districts and the sea all spread out below.

6 **The Rotermann Quarter** across a thoroughfare from the Old Town is a fusion of gourmet delicatessens and boutiques, office space and restaurants, where shopping features the hottest Estonian products alongside world-renowned brands. One of the most imposing edifices in the quarter is the limestone former salt storage building that now houses the **Estonian Museum of Architecture**.

7 **The Seaplane Harbour**, a modern maritime museum, is a pleasant 20-minute walk from the Old Town. The route goes through one of Tallinn's oldest quarters, ***Kalamaja*** (Fish-House), known for its wood architecture. Unique seaplane hangars, a tour aboard a World War II-era submarine and an around the world virtual adventure are some of the attractions that make the Seaplane Harbour an activity-filled destination for the whole family.

The **Rocca al Mare** area has become a pleasant recreational area. The long and smooth bicycle and roller-blading paths cater to the fitness-oriented crowd. The area is also home to the 8 **Tallinn Zoo** and the **Estonian Open Air Museum**. 9 The zoo is known for its wide range of hoofed and horned animals, but exotic species like tigers, elephants, polar bears, camels and snakes also figure in. For its part, the Open Air Museum will take you several centuries back, showing how Estonians lived on traditional farms. The Open Air Museum also holds exciting fairs, exhibitions and festivals. The peasant tavern serves up rustic food just as it was prepared in the olden days.

10 **Kadriorg Palace and the surrounding park** are a favourite place for both visitors and Tallinners. This grand Baroque ensemble was a gift from Peter the Great of Russia to the empress Catherine, hence the original name (Catherinedal in German). Kadriorg Park is the location of many museums, among them the main building of 11 the **Art Museum of Estonia, Kumu**, crowned the best museum in Europe in 2008 and likewise the largest and most prestigious exhibition space in Estonia. The residence of the president of the Republic of Estonia is also within the park.

The Seaplane Harbour lets everyone test themselves about things related to the sea.

Tallinn TV Tower – up in a lift and down with a parachute? Why not!

Just a short walk from Kadriorg is one of the classic 12 symbols of the Estonian nation and state, **Tallinn Song Festival Grounds**. There one can imagine what it would be like to be one of 30,000 singers assembled under the structurally distinctive arch, with an audience of more than 100,000 people seated on the grassy slope enjoying the choral music with a view of the sea beyond.

The song festival tradition, dating back to the 19th century, and the dance festival held simultaneously, is featured on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Song and Dance Festival is an important part of Estonians' national identity.

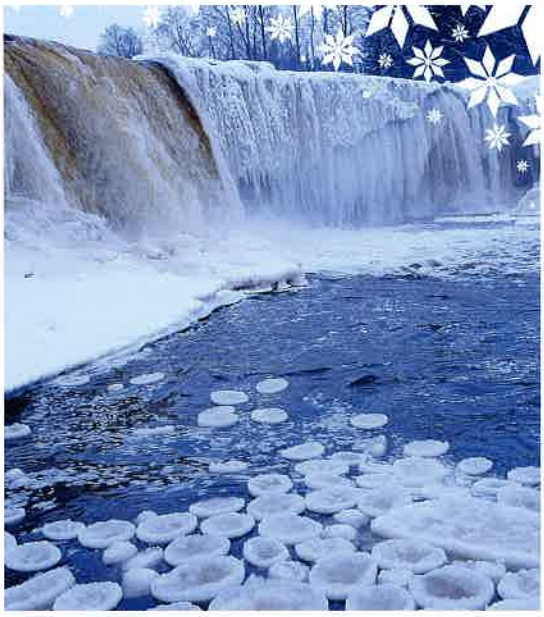
From the Song Festival Grounds, a logical next 13 stop is the **Tallinn Botanic Garden**, which is full of contrasts and a beautiful place for a stroll for any budding botanist. From alpine plants to palms, all climatic zones are covered, rounded out by temporary and seasonal exhibitions.

14 The **Tallinn TV Tower** next to the Botanic Garden offers a 360-degree panoramic view. Multimedia screens make the experience even more compelling, allowing one move in space as well as in time, showing what the city looked like in various time periods. A high-speed lift whisks visitors to the top – 170 metres high – in just 49 seconds. Those who dare and are in good health can go for a walk along the edge – secured by cables – 175 metres above the ground.

Day 3: Lahemaa (≈ 140 km)

En route to Lahemaa National Park, stop by 15 the **Estonian Golf & Country Club**, Estonia's only 18 + 9-hole golf course, where the "sea course" built in the middle of old-growth forest will stir the spirit of any true golfer. Nearby, the 16 eight-metre high **Jägala Waterfall** spills over the northern Estonian limestone cliff, especially stunning when it freezes and exciting during high water in spring. **Käsmu**, a coastal village with many erratic boulders in northern Lahemaa National Park, becomes the home of folklore festival and concerts during the summer. The 17 village's **Käsmu Sea Museum** offers a chance to go seafaring on a Viking ship and delve into the history of the onetime legendary captains' village, as Käsmu was known.

Lahemaa National Park, one of Europe's most important forest preserves, also features manor 18 complexes nestled deep in nature. **Palmse Manor** makes a good starting point for adventures in Lahemaa, being the home of the national park visitor centre. After a walk through the manor park, dine at the restaurant on the shores of the pond or, for a more informal, rustic setting, the tavern. The manor house itself has a hunting-lodge style hall and a wine cellar stocking a fine selection of bottles from various regions.



Jägala waterfall is particularly beautiful in winter when the water freezes into a curtain of ice crystals.

You can picture yourself in a different era in Rakvere Castle.

19 Sagadi manor is home to the **Sagadi Forest Museum**, which promotes the rich species and habitats in the forests that cover over half of Estonia's territory, along with forest and wildlife management practices. Yet another estate, 20 **Vihula manor**, is now home to the Baltics' first full-service ecospa set in a manor, and boasts a distillery museum alongside hotel and restaurant.

Palmse Manor has something great to offer people who love food, nature and culture.

Day 4: Rakvere–Kohtla–Toila–Narva-Jõesuu (≈ 140 km)

21 The historically intriguing town of **Rakvere** is home to the 13th century **Rakvere citadel**, where visitors and big and small can play knight, eat medieval style food, shoot a bow and arrow, ride horses and learn in thematic rooms, from torture chambers to astronomy exhibits.

22 At the foot of the citadel is the **Aqva Hotel & Spa** with a lavish array of saunas, pools and beauty services.

23 **Kohtla Mining Park & Museum** gives visitors an opportunity to don a helmet in underground passageways, and offers active pursuits such as ATV safaris, wall climbing and much more.

24 **Toila's Oru Park** is a place to stroll, admire various species of trees and shrubs, spring caves and enjoy a view of the sea. The Orhidee Wellness Centre 25 at the **Toila Spa** offers a luxurious holiday: a pool with underwater music and lights, saunas and beautician services, curative sea air and oxygen-rich pine forests.

26 **Narva-Jõesuu beach** is Estonia's longest and boasts clean, fine sand. The idyllic seaside resort has a long history, and caters to families and couples who put a premium on long walks, swimming and curative spa treatments.

A piece of the eastern border of the European Union: Estonia on the left, Russia on the right bank.

Day 5: Narva–Avinurme–Paide
(≈ 220 km)

27 For seven centuries, the Estonian border city of Narva on the banks of a wide river has been guarded by Narva fortress, with eight near-invincible bastions that constituted northern Europe's most powerful fortress. A defining event in European history, the Great Northern War between Sweden and Russia started right here in 1700, with the battle of Narva. In the summer months, the North Courtyard is open to visitors. Take part in the hurly-burly of the 17th century artisan world, stop by artisans' workshops and try your own hand at crafting.

The wooden chip basket you made yourself is the most beautiful one!

28 Over 100 years old and with more than 100 nuns, Kuremäe (Pühtitsa Dormition) Convent is the only Orthodox religious community of women in Estonia. The nuns provide guided tours but visitors are also free to strike out on their own.

Not far from Kuremäe is Kauksi beach, a beloved holiday destination on the shores of Europe's fourth-largest lake, Peipus, where the water is usually warmer than it is on the coast, but which otherwise resembles the sea with sky meeting the water at the horizon.

29 Amidst expansive ancient forests, at Avinurme Way of Life Centre and Avinurme Woodworking Centre, visitors can witness and experience the finest aspects of local traditions, trying their hand at basket weaving, baking bread, dipping candles and more. As to food, the menu emphasizes local organic fare.

30 Estonia's recent past in the form of Soviet era vehicles, farm machinery and roadwork equipment are on display at the Järva-Jaani Old Equipment Centre, where one can even go take a sauna in an old fire engine.

31 The former Livonian Order citadel in the town of Paide features the Wittenstein Time Centre, where special effects, video programmes and illusions make history come alive. The time machine is a lift that transports visitors from one era to the next. The various levels of the centre provide an

introduction to ancient and medieval times, the age of kings and czars, the occupation and the era of independence and re-independence.

For an enjoyable meal sourced from the own garden of one of Estonia's best restaurants and cooked over coals, visit Põhjaka manor just off the Tallinn-Tartu highway.

If you're in a hurry, head back to Tallinn, but those with a quest for adventure could keep on going to western Estonia, or to Tartu, the heart of southern Estonia.

Local mud and good hands are a healing combination.

WESTERN ESTONIA

Day 1: Tallinn–Haapsalu (≈ 110 km)

32 For an outing on the links, **Niitvälja Golf Course** – just 30 km away from Tallinn – is considered to be one of Scandinavia's finest golf courses

33 **Roosta Holiday Village**, meanwhile, offers up an activity-filled holiday with paintball, surfing, tennis, adventure park and sauna, in the pine forest.

34 Known for its curative mud, **Haapsalu** city is home to the **Haapsalu Episcopal Castle** with its storied history. On nights in August, the story of Estonia' most famous lady, the White Lady, is performed on the stage here. As the legend goes, she was bricked into a wall of the castle and now her apparition appears on nights when there is a full moon. The big, medieval style playground appeals to kids. Another option for children is

35 **Ilon's Wonderland**, which is named after Ilon Wikland, who is known as the illustrator of Astrid Lindgren's children's books and spent her own childhood in Haapsalu.

Wooden lace is one of the calling cards of romantic Haapsalu.

36 **Haapsalu** has Estonia's most romantic walks – the **beach promenade** or the winding shoreline route past houses adorned with intricate wood trim. Duck into one of the snug little cafes for refreshment and lounge on Tchaikovsky bench, named for the composer who used to summer here in the czarist days, taking in the view of the water and listening to the music emanating from the bench. Estonia's longest and most attractive covered railway platform is in Haapsalu, too. Here the Russian czar's train would stop to discharge the imperial entourage. The station-house is part of the ambience – today its Golden 37 Age interior is home to the **Estonian Railway Museum**.

38 Haapsalu's **Coastal Swedish Museum** is a good introduction to the next stop along the way, introducing a people who dwelt on these shores for some 1,000 years.

Kõpu lighthouse on Hiiumaa is one of the oldest constantly working lighthouses in the world.

Day 2: Vormsi and Hiiumaa
(≈ 220 km)

39 Passengers disembarking from the Haapsalu ferry on **Vormsi Island** could well be setting foot in a completely different land. The Swedish language place names here bear witness to the coastal Swedes who once lived here. Visitors are greeted by unspoiled nature, a coastal Swedish farm restored in Vormsi Farm Museum, small villages and the world's largest collection of stone circle crosses in Vormsi cemetery.

An ice road is opened between the mainland and the islands when the ice becomes thick enough.

This 100-year-old windmill hill is waiting for you on Saaremaa.

An utterly new experience for Estonia newbies is making the crossing by ice road. If the winter has been cold enough, this is an option for visiting quite a few Estonian islands in February and March.

Haapsalu is also the ferry port for departures to the country's second-largest island, **Hiiumaa**, which was formed as a result of a meteorite.

Hiiumaa's juniper-clad pastures are kept trimmed by a hardy breed of sheep with a thick coat of wool. The wool is sheared and taken to 40 **Vaemla wool factory**. At this veritable island institution, currently operated by a family business, 19th century machinery rumbles away and gives the public a chance to see how wool becomes yarn.

41 **Kassari peninsula** wears the island's crown of natural splendour. In windy weather, this reach of land sees an interesting phenomenon – waves often lap against the spit from two sides. Or if the waves are coming from one direction, the other side is mirror smooth. Surrounded by sea on three sides and secluded, it's the perfect place to relax, fish, or hire a bike or boat.

Every August, Hiiumaa's capital Kärdla holds Cafe Day. Local residents open up their backyards to the public and serve beverages and other delicacies, and the aroma of coffee wafting through the air draws islanders and mainlanders in droves.

History buffs interested in warfare can head for 42 the **Hiiumaa Military Museum**. The Soviet border guard era is introduced: barracks, surveillance and communications devices, and military equipment.

Hiiumaa is also known for its lighthouses, one of 43 them, the 43-metre-high **Tahkuna lighthouse**, designed in the offices of engineer Gustave Eiffel. 44 **Kõpu Lighthouse** also has a venerable past. It's one of the oldest continuously operating lighthouse in the world, and is open to the public.

Day 3: Saaremaa and Muhu Island (≈ 200 km)

From Hiiumaa's **Sõru Port**, site of a port tavern in summer and concerts, the ferry arrives in **Saaremaa**. The island of Saaremaa impresses with well-kept-up farmyards and locals with an easygoing sense of humour.

45 **Angla Windmill Mount** is a good initiation to the traditional lifestyle. Examine the workings of a windmill, a central establishment in the island culture, taste authentic Estonian black bread and learn how to make national handicrafts.

46 Another sight is Karja's 14th century **St. Catherine's Church**, which bears traces of magical pagan symbols painted on the ceiling above the altar during the time of construction.

TALLINN
Tallinn Bay
Kopli Bay
PÕHJA-TALLINN
LASNAMÄE
HAABERSTI
KRISTIINE
MUSTAMÄE
NÕMME
Lake Harku
Lake Ülemiste
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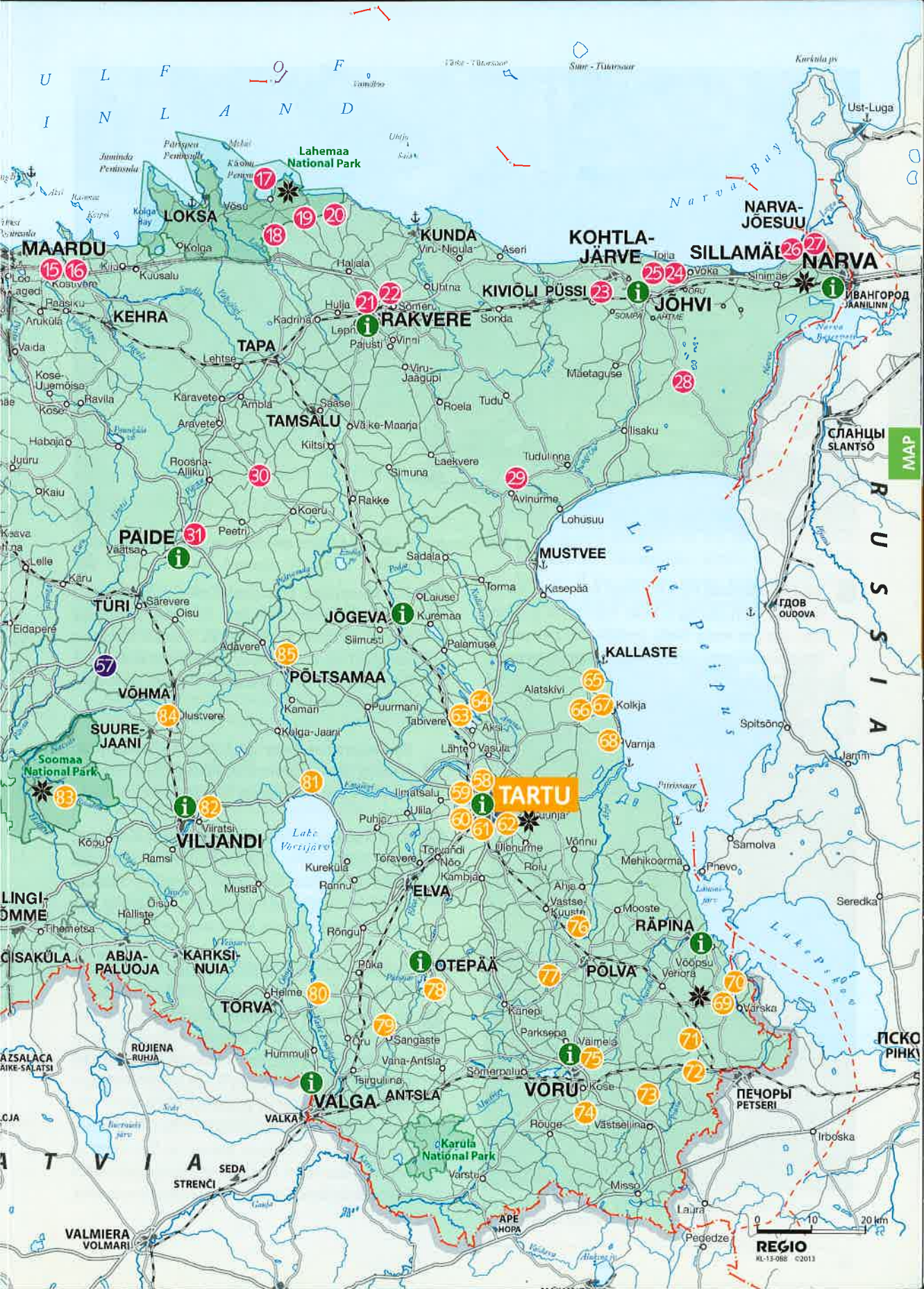
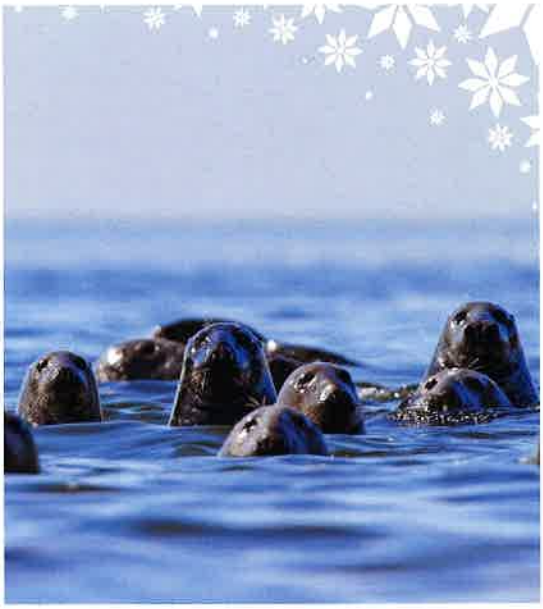
Tallinn – Helsinki
TALLINN
PALDISKI
KEILA
SAUE
RAPLA
HAAPSALU
KÄRDLA
Kõrgessaare
Mardihansu Bay
Kaina
Väinameri Sea
Matsalu National Park
Matsalu Bay
LIHULA
Virtsu
Onssaare
Vilsandi National Park
Kihelkonna
Kärla
Aste
Vaijala
KURESSAARE
Nasva
Salme
Abruka
Tõstamaa
Audru
PÄRNU
Pärnu Bay
Võiste
Häädemeeste
Kihnu
Ruhnu
GULF OF RIGA
AINAŽI
HEINASTE
STAICELE
SALACGRĪVA
SALATSI
LIMBAŽI
LEMSALU
BALTIC SEA
TOURIST INFORMATION
NORTHERN ESTONIA
WESTERN ESTONIA
SOUTHERN ESTONIA
TOP 10 DESTINATIONS
PORT



U L F O F I N L A N D
Lahemaa National Park
LOKSA
MAARDU
KUNDA
KOHTLA-JÄRVE
NARVA-JÕESUU
SILLAMÄE
NARVA
ИВАНГОРОД
JAANILINN
KIVIÕLI
PÜSSI
JÕHVI
KEHRA
RAKVERE
TAPA
TAMSALU
PAIDE
TÜRI
JÕGEVA
MUSTVEE
KALLASTE
PÕLTSAMAA
VÕHMA
SUURE-JAANI
Soomaa National Park
VILJANDI
TARTU
ELVA
RÄPINA
PÕLVA
OTEPÄÄ
TÕRVA
VALGA
ANTSLA
VÕRU
ПЕЧОРЫ
PETSERI
СЛАНЦЫ
SLANTSÕ
ГДОВ
OUDOVA
Lake Peipus
Lake Võrtsjärv
Lake Pskov
Narva Bay
Ust-Luga
Kolga
Kuusalu
Kiiu
Kostivere
Raasiku
Aruküla
Vaida
Kose-Uuemõisa
Ravila
Kose
Habaja
Juuru
Kaiu
Lehtse
Karavete
Ambla
Aravete
Saase
Kiltsi
Roosna-Alliku
Koeru
Peetri
Väätsa
Lelle
Käru
Särevere
Oisu
Eidapere
Adavere
Kamari
Kulga-Jaani
Puurmani
Tabivere
Äksi
Lähte
Vasula
Ilmatsalu
Ulila
Puhja
Viiratsi
Kõpu
Ramsi
Mustla
Õisu
Halliste
Tihemetsa
Kureküla
Rannu
Tõravere
Tõrvandi
Nõo
Kambja
Ulenurme
Võnnu
Roiu
Ahja
Vastse-Kuuste
Mooste
Rõngu
Põka
Helme
Hummuli
Sangaste
Vana-Antsla
Tsirguliina
Kanepi
Parksepa
Välmela
Sõmerpalu
Kose
Rõuge
Västseliina
Varstu
Misso
Laura
Pededze
Mehikoorma
Phevo
Samolva
Seredka
Võõpsu
Veriora
Värska
Irboska
Spitsõno
Jamm
Alatskivi
Kolkja
Varnja
Kasepää
Torma
Laiuse
Kuremaa
Palamuse
Sadala
Laekvere
Simuna
Rakke
Tudulinna
Avinurme
Lohusuu
Ilisaku
Mäetaguse
Tudu
Roela
Viru-Jaagupi
Pajusti
Vinni
Sõmeru
Uhtna
Haljala
Viru-Nigula
Aseri
Tolla
Võka
Sinimäe
Kadrina
Hulja
Lepna
Sonda
Vaiku-Maarja
Kiltsi
Kaiu
Lelle
Eidapere
Kõpu
Ramsi
Tihemetsa
Ülenurme
Roiu
Mehikoorma
Phevo
Samolva
Seredka
Lake Peipus
Lake Võrtsjärv
Lake Pskov
RUSSIA
LATVIA
RÜJIENA
RUHJA
SEDA
STRENČI
VALMIERA
VOLMARI
APE
HOPA
Karula National Park
0 10 20 km
REGIO
KL-13-088 ©2013
MAP

Mossy old stone fences and colourful patterns are the calling cards of Muhu Island.

47 **Vilsandi National Park** is a treat for nature lovers. Gaze at seals during a boat ride or on a diving trip, and see many birds, orchids and rare plants. The national park visitor centre is in Loona manor, where a permanent exhibition, fossils and films provide insight into the national park. Regular guided hikes are held every day in the summer season.



The two sides of seal-watching – you watch the seal and the seal watches you.

48 The **Kuressaare Episcopal Castle** in Saaremaa's capital Kuressaare holds the best-preserved medieval citadel in the Baltics. Besides the site's historical value, numerous cultural events are held here, such as the international opera days held every summer.

Kuressaare has many spa hotels to choose from, running the spectrum from luxury stays, curative spas to good options for families with children.

49 **Kaali Meteorite Crater** lets us look some 4,000 years back in time. The meteorite fell at a time when Saaremaa was already settled, causing major damage and, amazingly, impacting the mythology of cultures as far away as India.

While on the small island of **Muhu** – the stepping stone between Saaremaa and the mainland – 50 visit the **Muhu Museum**, which takes up the whole fishing village of Koguva. It is known for its authenticity but also its remarkable integrity. The village streets and squares meander and intersect each other, all lined by grand old stone walls. This is no ordinary open air museum – here the houses are still lived in. Pädaste manor on the island of Muhu is also home to Alexander restaurant, which has been declared Estonia's best on several occasions.

Matsalu National Park is a bird-watcher's paradise.

Day 4: Matsalu National Park and Kihnu Island (≈ 80 km)

Heading back toward the mainland, the route 51 passes through **Matsalu National Park**, which was picked as one of the world's top 30 bird watching sites. For an especially impressive spectacle, come during the migration season in spring and autumn. Several observation towers have been erected on the shores of Matsalu Bay. For more information on these, drop by the Matsalu Nature Centre located in Penijõe manor.

From Munalaid port, a ferry departs to the **island of Kihnu**, whose culture is included on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage list. The culture that is the claim to fame cannot be seen only in the 52 **Kihnu Museum**, but all around as well. Folk costume is still worn here and women of a impressive can be seen driving motorcycles with sidecars.

To really discover the diminutive island, hire a bicycle at the port or take a tour in a flatbed truck. July brings a maritime festival to the island, and fun for the whole family with a handicrafts and food fair, craft and dance workshops, concerts by local instrumentalists, competitions for children, fishermen and sports-minded, and evening dance parties.

Day 5: Pärnu County (≈ 180 km)

Upon returning from Kihnu, the whole family can 53 find fun and adventure at the **Estonian Museum Railway at Lavassaare**, which chronicles the history of the narrow-gauge railway and offers a chance to ride an old-fashioned train.

UNESCO Cultural Heritage and the era of technology go hand-in-hand on Kihnu Island.

Estonia's summer capital Pärnu brings sports and entertainment to the beach.

54 The city of **Pärnu** years ago was the very model of high society – dapper gentlemen, dainty ladies with parasols, a promenade, white sands... The resort still has much of its refined charm today. Dubbed Estonia's summer capital, the city also offers diverse attractions in winter at its spas, including the unique **Dead Sea Skin Treatment and Water Centre**.

The strongest soap bubble? No, it's the Glass Museum, where you can give glassblowing a go.

Pärnu boasts architectural gems in different styles, from Art Nouveau to functionalism, all backed up by a busy cultural life anchored by the Contemporary Art centre and the winter ice festival.

55 Outside Pärnu city, the **Jõulumäe Recreation Centre** warms athletes' hearts. Instead of gyms and aerobics, here the emphasis is on the great outdoors, and restorative forest air. Venue such as ball courts, a golf course, bowling alley, athletics fields and trails for all seasons and sports cater to different ages and fitness levels.

56 **Järvakandi Glass Museum** – the bastion of old-style glass blowers – gives visitors a chance to indulge their fancies and mould a personal souvenir.

57 **C. R. Jakobson Farm Museum** in Kurgja allows visitors to learn about old farm culture in a model farm personally established by one of the seminal 19th century national awakening figures, Carl Robert Jakobson.

After discovering the islands and the western coast, it's easy to return to Tallinn, but southern Estonia beckons as well, known for Estonia's second city Tartu with an atmosphere completely unlike Tallinn. The south also holds smaller cultural fragments who much like the Kihnu islanders, have preserved their old way of life.

SOUTHERN ESTONIA

Day 1: Tartu–Peipus lakeshore (≈ 90 km)

The university town of Tartu is associated with youthful love, intellectual inquiry, Bohemian parties and joyful hubbub in cosy cafes. Students set the tone as Tartu is the home of one of the oldest universities in northern Europe, dating back to 1632, and they're everywhere, both in front of the main building with its six columns, and on 58 nearby Town Hall Square. When the students are in class, stage a photo op by the square's sculpture of kissing students, a symbol of the city.

Town Hall Square is the heart of Tartu, home to exciting events year round, from the Hanseatic Days to the tARTuFF love-themed film festival.

You can test physics and chemistry on your own skin in Science Centre AHHAA.

The photo you simply have to take – a kiss with the Kissing Students.

For romantically-inclined, the ramparts of 59 Toome Hill are the spot for a stroll: the leafy depths of this rambling English-style park also contain the University of Tartu History Museum, the lovely Angel's and Devil's bridges and sculptures of historical personages.

The 700-year-old terra cotta sculpture collection 60 at 14th century St. John's Church, consisting of nearly 1000 figures, is unique in Europe.

61 In Antonius Courtyard, visitors can watch artisans at work and purchase millinery, leather goods and pottery.

62 The Ahhaa Science Centre introduces the science in the most exciting way possible – hands-on. A planetarium, science theatre, DIY experiments, medicine exhibits, a lift leading down into the "bowels of the earth" and much more fun for the entire family.

The Ice Age Centre takes you back to the times when elephants were hairy and makes you think about the state of our environment in the future.

In the Tartu area, take a trip to the distant past 63 in the form of the Ice Age Centre, where the exhibition surveys the history of the epoch, typical animals, all the way up to today's changing climate. From the centre, go on a boat tour across picturesque Lake Saadjärv, which is also a relic of the Ice Age.

Indeed, as you leave the Ice Age Centre, take note of how the glaciers scoured the surrounding landscape. The drumlins here form one of Europe's classic ice-gouged landscapes, and the movements of the ice sheets are still very evident. 64 Amid the low ridges is Elistvere Animal Park, where large animals such as bear, lynx, moose and others roam – rare in Europe, but still abundant in Estonian forests.

With the nature tour behind, culture lies ahead in the form of the Onion Road, as locals call an area where a number of ethnicities and cultures 65 intermingle. In Alatskivi manor, the most beautiful Neogothic building in the Baltics, the history of the Baltic German nobility and the lives of servants intertwine. Visitors can walk around the castle wearing period costumes and sample a cuisine that fuses Estonian, German and Scottish traditions.

Heading past the manor to the shores of Lake Peipus to the southeast, visit the Old Believers, a religious and cultural sect of people descended from religious refugees from Russia who arrived in Estonia three centuries ago after a schism in the Orthodox Church. Their traditions remain vital 66 today and are profiled at the Peipsimaa Visitors Centre, where after the exhibits and a cup of tea from a samovar, visitors can go for a ride on a pushbike or, in winter, kicksled. The sights of the museum continue in real life as you head south along the shore past ancient one-street villages lined with Old Believers houses. To gain even 67 more insight into the local culture, there is an Old 68 Believers Museum in Kolkja village and Prayer House in Varnja village.

Elistvere Animal Park lets you observe Estonian wild animals in conditions similar to their natural habitat.

Onions from the shores of Lake Peipus give you good health and rosy cheeks.

And be sure to feast on the local cuisine along the Peipus shore, featuring lake fish and savoury pastries. Pickles, smoked fish are sold by locals along the roadsides, along with Estonia's most celebrated onions, known for their long storage life and flavour. Straw-bale houses in Nina fishing village offer accommodations with a counterculture ethic.

The heavy brooches of the Seto's make a beautiful sound as they dance – come and listen for yourself!

Day 2: Setomaa–Võru (≈ 90 km)

Just 100 kilometres to the southeast from the shores of the Peipus is the next gem – the Seto region or Setomaa. It is home to an ethnic group that has its own centuries-old customs, language, cuisine and folk costume. Their style of folk singing, *leelo*, is honoured on the UNESCO list of Intangble Heritage.

69 The lifestyle, handicrafts and everyday items used by the Setos can be seen in the Seto Farm Museum. Local food and drink can be enjoyed in an authentic Seto atmosphere right next door to the museum. If you're fortunate enough to visit on a Seto feast day, these are worth partaking of the one-day Seto Kingdom, Seto song festival, Easter celebrations or the fish and onion fair.

70 The Seto region is also famous for Estonia's best-known brand of mineral water. Värska Spa and Water Park offers a taste of mineral water 500 million years old and a chance to relax in mineral water baths, said to improve the circulation. Visitors are also treated to unique curative mud procedures that rejuvenate the skin.

71 In addition to its famous mineral water, the Seto region is also renowned for its sand - which you can find out all about at the Piusa Caves Visitor Centre. Sand for glass-making was first extracted here 100 years ago, leaving spacious caves supported by natural columns.

The sandstone caves in Piusa have the largest winter colony of bats in the Baltic States.

The caves are manmade, but well-endowed for natural species, like the bats that winter here. Nature trails spread out in the woodland surrounding the quarry, and a pottery workshop nearby sells traditional-style ceramics made on the premises.

Those with a deeper interest in the Seto people 72 can also visit Obinitsa Museum and continue on 73 to Vastseliina Episcopal Castle. This 14th century landmark was for centuries one of the strongest bastions of resistance to invaders. The ruins of the citadel are open to the public, with food service and local crafts available, and various nature trails around the site.

74 The highest hill in the Baltic States, *Suur-Munamägi* or Great Egg Hill, affords views of up to 50 kilometres from a 346.7 metre elevation. Russia and Latvia are also within shouting distance.

Idyllic Võru is set on a lake with a beach and 75 promenade. Kubija Hotel-Nature Spa in a natural setting just outside town provides a concentrated dose of the charms.

Southern Estonia has accommodations options ranging from spa hotels to tourist farmstays. Many farms offer the age-old tradition of taking a smoke sauna.

Day 3: Võru–Otepää–Võrtsjärv (≈ 170 km)

To the north of Võru, the River Ahja offers boat trips through an old valley of 400 million year old reddish Devonian sandstone. The best known 76 area is called *Taevaskoda* – Heaven's Hall. The cliffs are more than 20 metres high here, forming a natural echo chamber that amplifies the river sounds and birdsong.

One of southern Estonia's places of interest is the 77 Estonian Road Museum, where visitors start out walking on planks across wetlands and finish up on asphalt. Environments and road signs from the past can be seen along the way. Witness large roadworking equipment in a true to life setting, and enjoy the sight of historical vehicles as well as

Hiking in the midst of the beautiful sandstone outcrops in Taevaskoda is a great experience.

The hilly landscape of southern Estonia attracts sportsmen of varying levels of professionalism and sense of humour.

the electric car of the future. A unique historical stable for postal horses and old-fashioned bicycle also await. Children have their own traffic village.

Otepää is Estonia's winter sport mecca, and hosts even World Cup events. Each winter, international-calibre skiers arrive, the world-class athletes training alongside beginners.

In summer, the hilly landscape also offers athletic opportunities – intermediate and advanced bicyclists can cool off in picturesque lakes after exertion. The **observation platform at Tehvandi ski jump hill** is a great vantage point for surveying the rolling landscape of Otepää. The height of the platform is 34 metres, 218 metres above sea level. A climbing wall at the ski jump facility and a zip line up in the treetops are exciting draws for adrenaline junkies.

Made of 1.5 million local bricks, **Sangaste Castle** is one of the grandest landmarks in the Estonian countryside. A nature lover and rye grower, Count Berg wanted a true castle with large rooms; each room had to have different kinds of windows. Besides the manor, the circular stable, dairy and dendropark are attractions at Sangaste.

Heading toward Võrtsjärv, pass the classicist **Barclay de Tolly mausoleum**, last resting place of one of Europe's most famous military leaders – a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars – and his wife.

Võrtsjärv is Estonia's second largest lake after Peipus and there are many holiday opportunities in the region. If ordering a holiday package tour at **Võrtsjärv Visitor Centre**, remember to look at the centre itself – made of eco-friendly materials, wood, clay and straw.

The historical sailing boat offers fishing trips and tours on Lake Võrtsjärv, the second-biggest lake in the Baltic States.

The ruins of the Viljandi Order Castle offer magnificent views of the lake.

Day 4: Viljandi–Soomaa–Põltsamaa

(≈ 120 km)

A small city with a long history, Viljandi lies on the shores of a picturesque lake. The best views of the environs are from the 13th century Viljandi Castle ruins. The panorama has been compared to Switzerland. The symbols of the city are boat trips on the lake and the suspension bridge at the castle ruins. Art buffs should stop by the Kondas Centre, devoted to Naive art.

In July, Viljandi is the home of a world-famous Viljandi Folk Festival, one of the most fun and family-friendly music festivals. The performers and audiences are increasingly international in flavour and dancing and workshops are just as important as the concert experience.

Soomaa National Park is where nature's master artist has created something extraordinary – melting snow floods a huge area in spring, rendering it traversable only by boat. Exciting tour packages are on offer during this period – canoeing past trees and houses. In winter, there is kicksledging on frozen rivers, and in summer, river sailing and saunas. Soomaa is also home to some of the world's most untouched and loveliest bogs, where hiking is an unforgettable experience.

From Soomaa, set a course for Olustvere Manor. It's a place to admire the architecture, and ride a horse and meet other domesticated animals. Workshops are open by advance reservation, featuring yarn dyeing, bread baking, glass blowing and much more.

Põltsamaa Castle is home to an esteemed wine cellar and a culinary museum. Põltsamaa berry and fruit wines gained popularity in Estonia and other countries around 100 years ago and the castle offers them for tasting and purchase.

Põltsamaa is a pleasant midpoint that is an equal distance from all corners of Estonia. From here, choose any one of our three itineraries. Strike out for new territory or – why not? – revisit the places you found most interesting.

People use boats to get around during the fifth season in Soomaa National Park.

WOW-QUIZ

Sometimes you only need couple of good questions to get an overview of the whole country! All positively surprising answers can be found in this very brochure. We also wrote them at the bottom of this page.

1. The grand Baroque ensemble of Kadriorg Palace was a gift from Peter the Great for a very special lady. Who was she?
2. Tallinn TV Tower allows visitors to walk, secured by cables, along the outside of the building. How high up does this spine-tingling activity take place?
3. Where is Estonia's longest sandy seaside beach?
4. Estonia has extensive shoreline along Europe's fourth-largest lake. Name the body of water.
5. What world-famous engineer's office designed Tahkuna lighthouse on Hiiumaa Island?
6. What is the name of Estonia's largest island?
7. How many national parks does Estonia have?
8. Which of Estonia's national parks is considered one of the best bird watching places in the world?
9. Two kissing students are the symbol of which Estonian city?
10. The panoramas of what Estonian town can be compared to those of Switzerland?

Right answers:

1. The empress Catherine I / 2. 175 m / 3. Narva-Jõesuu / 4. Lake Peipus / 5. Gustave Eiffel
6. Saaremaa ("land of island") / 7. 5 national parks (Lahemaa, Matsalu, Vilsandi, Soomaa, Karula)
8. Matsalu National Park / 9. Tartu / 10. Viljandi

ENG

Estonia in brief

Official name	Republic of Estonia
Area	45,227 km²
Inhabitants	1.3 million
Currency	Euro
Capital	Tallinn (400 000 inhabitants)
Official language	Estonian
Form of government	Parliamentary democracy
Independence declared	24 February 1918, 20 August 1991

The Republic of Estonia is a member of the European Union, Schengen area, NATO and OECD.

Estonia is in the East European time zone (GMT/BST + 02:00).

Estonia's country code is +372.
To place an international call start by dialling 00.

Practical information

Wi-Fi	More than 1000 Wi-Fi hotspots all over the country, available mostly free.
Paying	Most shops, restaurants, hotels and other services accept international credit cards. There are plenty of ATM-s in the cities, but take cash with you travelling to countryside.
Mobile phone	You can buy pre-paid mobile phone calling cards from kiosks, petrol stations, post offices and supermarkets.
Emergency aid	112
Tourist information	There are official Tourist Information Centres in all bigger cities and county centres. Do not hesitate to come in and ask for advice, maps or general tips on where to wine and dine and how to make the most of your holiday in Estonia. Most offices are open every day during work hours.

Traffic

Speed limit	50 km/h in urban areas, 90 km/h on main highways, unless otherwise signposted.
Parking	There is paid parking in most town centres. Look for more information on special signs and parking metres.
Driving	Whenever driving, turn on your headlights and fasten safety belts in both front and rear seats. NB! Drivers are only permitted less than 0.1 mg of alcohol in one millilitre of blood.

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